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The Senate and the Test Ban

Averell Harriman had initialed the test-ban pact; Dean Rusk was preparing to sign the agreement. But the Constitution of the United States provides that the Senate must ratify any treaty and it is John F. Kennedy's task to marshal the support of two-thirds of the voting senators in behalf of a limited test-ban treaty.

In a measured, if indirect, appeal to the Senate, the President declared in his nationwide address last week: "I am hopeful that this nation will promptly approve the limited test-ban treaty. There will, of course, be debate in the country and in the Senate. The Constitution wisely requires the advice and consent of the Senate to all treaties and that consultation has already begun..."

Even before he spoke the words, the President had dispatched top aides including Secretary Rusk to inform key senators of the draft treaty coming back from the negotiating table in Moscow. Clearly, Mr. Kennedy had on his mind the supreme tragedy of President Woodrow Wilson's career—his failure to gain Senate ratification of the pact that would have brought the U.S. into the League of Nations after World War I.

Of that historical precedent, Sen. Hubert Humphrey, the Democratic Whip who is leading the drive for test-ban ratification, declared: "The Senate made one great mistake when it rejected the League of Nations. I just can't see it making another one of this magnitude. I assume the Senate *will* ratify the treaty."

It was Humphrey who earlier in the week tried to round up bipartisan support with the proposal that rank-and-file senators of both parties accompany Dean Rusk to the treaty-signing ceremony in Moscow. "The Republicans," Humphrey

explained, "like to say they want to be in on the take-offs as well as the crash landings." But his plan never took off. Sen. J. William Fulbright, the scholarly chairman of the all-important Foreign Relations Committee, showed little interest, neither did ranking GOP committee members Bourke B. Hickenlooper and George D. Aiken.

Waiting Policy: In spite of the excitement in Moscow and at the White House, most senators decided to wait for expert testimony on the pros and cons of the test ban. Typical was the reaction of an aide to Maine's Margaret Chase Smith: "She would look pretty silly going into hearings on the merits of the case with her mind made up."

The low-keyed Senatorial caution, notwithstanding, a powerful groundswell was building up for the treaty. The Democratic leadership stood solidly behind the President, and there was plenty of Republican support. "I don't see any political mileage in opposing this treaty," said one GOP senator. "It is very likely that the Senate would

approve such a treaty," said the GOP's John Sherman Cooper. Some senators who previously favored continued atomic testing—on national security grounds—were lining up behind the limited ban. Politically, the test ban had appeal. One senator reported: "Mothers stop me on the street and ask me about fallout." Another added: "Women are afraid of testing and they are telling people about it." Senators were bound to be influenced by the generally favorable reception accorded news of the treaty around the nation. One astute political observer forecast: "It will be a rare senator who will run next year on an I-voted-to-ban-the-ban platform."

Opponents: Thus far the only vociferous opponent of the test ban in the Senate was Arizona's Barry Goldwater who argued the treaty would enable the Soviets to improve their tactical weapons while barring the U.S. from developing large-yield warheads. His position is tacitly shared by such colleagues as South Carolina's Strom Thurmond and Nebraska's Carl Curtis. And Goldwater found some comfort in the reaction of Dr. Edward Teller, "father of the H-bomb," who said: "I have serious doubts that the treaty in present form is best for our country." Though a Goldwater bloc may spearhead an anti-treaty fight, few senators believed there would be a "Republican position" as such.

The White House reportedly has lined up the highest level support for the treaty among prominent Republicans including Dwight D. Eisenhower, who first proposed a test ban to Nikita Khrushchev in 1958. Allen Dulles, John J. McCloy, Henry Cabot Lodge, and Gen. Lucius Clay. And any Senatorial opposition to such respected opinion might seem to be the sheerest political obstructionism. If these GOP leaders do speak out on behalf of the treaty, some Congressional observers predict that anywhere from 75 to 90 senators would vote for ratification.

The Administration is also banking on a favorable report from the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Until recently, the advocates of testing counted on the support of the service chiefs, who, as military men,



Dean Rusk



Barry Goldwater



Hubert Humphrey